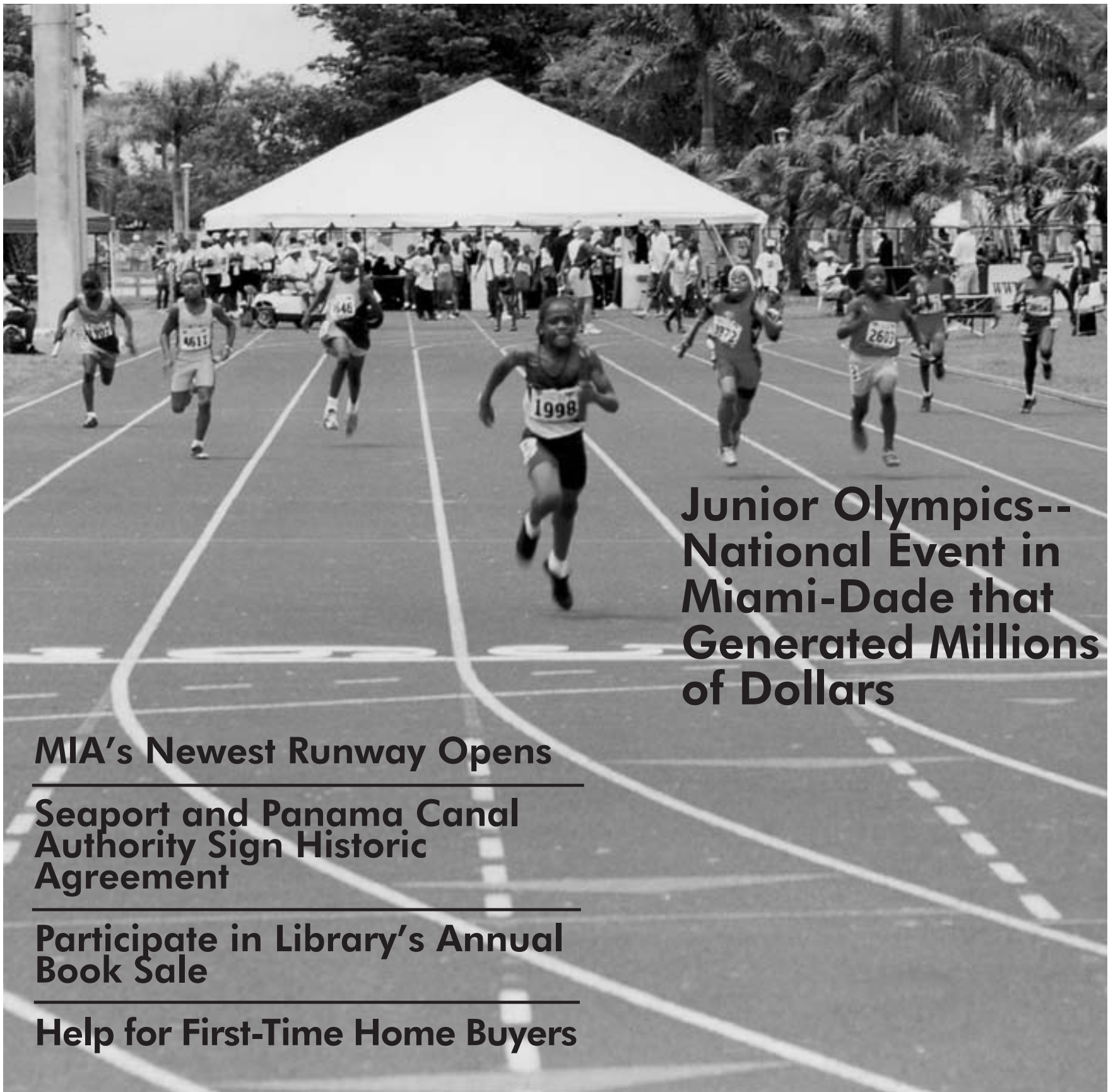


CountyCitizen

Fall 2003

We're more than county employees, we're your neighbors miamidade.gov



**Junior Olympics--
National Event in
Miami-Dade that
Generated Millions
of Dollars**

MIA's Newest Runway Opens

**Seaport and Panama Canal
Authority Sign Historic
Agreement**

**Participate in Library's Annual
Book Sale**

Help for First-Time Home Buyers

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Cut it Out

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SPEAKING

Of

Miami-Dade County Looks Forward to Becoming the Site of the Permanent Secretariat of the Free Trade Areas of the Americas



In the coming weeks, you will see the initials FTAA all over the place. They stand for the Free Trade Areas of the Americas, which represents perhaps the greatest opportunity in the history of Miami-Dade County.

As we look forward to welcoming the FTAA Ministerial Meeting and the Eighth Americas Business Forum in November, Miami-Dade residents and employees should be proud that their community is poised on the threshold of becoming one of the most important communities in the world.

This is no exaggeration. The objective of these meetings of leading trade ministers is another step in the creation of the FTAA. In addition, their function is to work toward selecting the site of the FTAA Permanent Secretariat.

The FTAA will be the largest cooperative trade coalition in history. It will join together 34 democratic Western Hemisphere countries stretching from Canada’s Northwest Territories to Cape Horn off the southern tip of Chile. It will create a market of 800 million consumers -- with a combined gross domestic product of \$14 trillion.

If Miami-Dade is selected as the site of the Secretariat, it will bring an incredible burst of activity and move this community into the epicenter of the Western Hemisphere.

The impact upon this community will be similar to the effect that becoming the Seat of the European Union had on Brussels. That city went from being the capital of a country the size of Maryland, to the capital of Europe.

The prospect for Miami-Dade is similar. Since a significant share of Hemispheric trade would pass through our airport and seaport, Miami-Dade County would become a major beneficiary of this trade.

It is estimated that being the home of the Permanent Secretariat would create 90,000 jobs and bring about \$4 million in trade to Florida. It may bring as much as \$160 million in tax revenue.

In addition, it would strengthen Miami-Dade’s position as the hub of international trade and finance in this Hemisphere and throughout the world.

Beside these direct benefits, it would bring indirect rewards to our community. It would stimulate the growth of our service industries, enhance our educational reputation, and make Miami-Dade an even more appealing destination for international conferences and events.

It would strengthen our position as a tourist destination and as a home to international companies.

Although various sites are in contention for this opportunity, there is little question that Miami-Dade County, as the acknowledged Gateway to the Americas, is most qualified as the home of the Permanent Secretariat of the FTAA.

Miami-Dade County is the home of 300 regional and world headquarters of Fortune 500 companies, with more than 100 foreign consular offices and foreign business organizations located here. With more than 100 banks, savings and loans, and investment banking organizations, we have the largest concentration of financial institutions in the Southeast. As a center of world commerce, we have the largest number of custom brokers and freight forwarders in the United States.

Recognizing our special location and opportunities, we created the Jay Malina International Trade Consortium to promote trade through Miami’s airport and seaport -- and to fortify the international business community. We also have a very active Sister Cities Program with about 22 Sister City and Sister Port agreements in the Americas and around the world.

These are some of the reasons why the Port of Miami is the busiest passenger cruise port in the world -- and Miami International Airport moves more international cargo than any airport in the Nation. As a hub of international commerce -- Miami-Dade County has a population that mirrors much of the Americas in language and custom.

And just as importantly, the almost 30,000 men and women who work for the County have the spirit, vigor and backbone to support this great opportunity that will bring the world to our doorstep.

Alex Penelas
Miami-Dade County Mayor

MESSAGE

from the County Manager

Another Decade of Progress?

So many communities today have to deal with the challenge of unmet needs, and Miami-Dade County is no exception. Yet, the County is being presented with the rare opportunity of being able to truly address some of its unmet needs. In 1972, the voters of Miami-Dade County approved a \$553 million General Obligation Bond (GOB) Decade of Progress program. Water and sewer infrastructure, road and traffic flow improvements, transit facilities, solid waste disposal facilities, regional parks, public health facilities, and Metrozoo are just some of the projects that benefited from these bonds. As the County prepares to make final payments on this 30-year bond program, the residents of Miami-Dade County have another historic opportunity to bring substantial and far-reaching improvements to their quality of life, boost the County's economy, and create new jobs by utilizing these payments to finance a new comprehensive, countywide General Obligation Bond issue.

Miami-Dade County plans for a new bond initiative could include improvements to our roads, water and sewer system, seaport, recreational facilities, criminal justice facilities, environmental projects, and expansion of cultural facilities such as the Museum of Science and the Miami Art Museum. By placing on the 2004 ballot a unified program for the funding of similar projects, we would be giving all residents the opportunity to ensure that Miami-Dade County achieves recognition as a truly global city. Furthermore, we will be taking advantage of a unique opportunity for residents to approve a fiscally responsible capital improvement program that benefits the entire community without having to raise our debt service millage from the 2003 level.

Over the next few months, you will be invited to meetings in your communities where you will have the opportunity to discuss what types of projects the new bond program should fund and how the projects should be prioritized. The County will also be organizing a small working group of community leaders and professionals to reach out and educate neighborhood organizations and residents about the bond program.

This program will be built around our residents' vision for our County. While we will seek citizen input regarding the types of improvements desired through a variety of forums, none are more important than the forthcoming community meetings. For this reason, I strongly encourage you to attend and participate in these meetings. A list of upcoming community meetings will be available in the coming months on our web portal at www.miamidade.gov. Residents may also obtain additional information from the Team Metro Answer Center at 305-468-5900.

Help to build a better future for our community. Get involved.



George M. Burgess
County Manager



Economic Impact of Securing the FTAA Secretariat in Miami-Dade: Thousands of Jobs and Billions of Dollars

By Hernando Vergara, Communications

An economic impact study conducted in May 2003 by Enterprise Florida and Florida Free Trade Area of the Americas Inc., (FTAA) revealed that securing the FTAA Secretariat in Miami would yield 89,259 new jobs and add \$13.6 billion to Florida's Gross State Product (GSP).

The study also indicates that additional economic activity would generate an estimated \$157 million annually in fiscal revenues for the state of Florida and local governments.

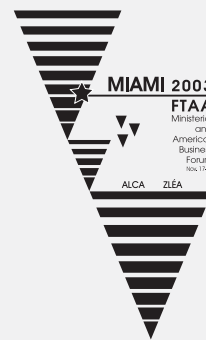
"The benefits to Florida's economy of being chosen as the location for the FTAA's permanent Secretariat are immeasurable," said Jorge Arrizurrieta, President and COO of Florida FTAA Inc. "With the Secretariat located in Miami, Florida will gain as it will be easier to attract future foreign investments and international trade."

The upcoming VIII Americas Business Forum and the meeting of the Ministers of Trade to be held in Miami the week of November 17th will bring the process even closer to reality. Originally envisioned in 1994 during the Summit of the Americas (also held in Miami), the Free Trade Area of the Americas unique trading union would reach all the way from Tierra del Fuego to the North Pole.

Being the Brussels of the Americas has incredible economic impact ramifications that would share the wealth across the entire state of Florida. The numbers speak for themselves:

- Jobs: passage of the FTAA and locating the Secretariat in Florida would result in an approximate additional 89,259 jobs for Florida's employment base.
- Payroll: the increased employment could, on average, boost Florida's payroll by about \$3.2 billion each year.
- GSP Growth: implementation of the FTAA and the presence of the Secretariat in Florida would add about \$13.6 billion annually to Florida's Gross State Product.
- Taxes: this additional economic activity would generate an estimated \$157 million annually in fiscal revenues for Florida's state and local governments.

"In November, we have an incredibly unique opportunity to showcase this great state of ours. The stage is ours when Miami hosts the VIII America's Business Forum and FTAA Ministerial Meeting from November 17 - 21, 2003," said Ambassador Chuck Cobb, Chairman of Florida FTAA Inc.



The Americas Business Forum was created as a forum for leaders of businesses and other interests throughout the Western Hemisphere to come together and provide input on the FTAA. Workshops and Plenary Sessions offer these leaders the opportunity to formulate positions and recommendations about the formation of the agreement. At the conclusion of the Forum, representatives meet with the Trade Ministers and other government representatives to present their recommendations and findings.

"For Florida, November 17-21 is like a dress rehearsal. If the state and the local community demonstrate the professionalism of a world-class city and showcase the best Florida has to offer, a compelling case will be reinforced as to why the FTAA Permanent Secretariat belongs in Florida," said Ambassador Luis Laureda, FTAA Executive Director. "The stakes are high and the mission is clear. It is up to all of us to mobilize and make sure the FTAA Permanent Secretariat is housed in Florida."

YOUR *Government*

Miami-Dade County Awarded for Excellence by the National Association of Counties (NACo)

Miami-Dade County recently received numerous 2003 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Awards, 24 to be exact, for successfully implemented projects that resulted in improved customer service and efficiency, significant revenue enhancements and monetary savings. For the past three decades NACo has been recognizing innovative County programs across the nation.

“Our award winning programs represent our employee’s initiative and dedication to explore new and creative methods of providing services to our community”, said County Manager George M. Burgess. “I congratulate our winners and all of the employees who work hard to make these programs a success”.

The following departments received 2003 NACo awards:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| • Building | (one award) |
| • Communications | (two awards) |
| • Consumer Services | (two awards) |
| • eGovernment | (six awards) |
| • Employee Relations | (one award) |
| • General Services Administration | (one award) |
| • Juvenile Assessment Center | (one award) |
| • Miami-Dade Housing Agency | (one award) |
| • Miami-Dade Police | (four awards) |
| • Office of Performance Improvement | (one award) |
| • Parks and Recreation | (two awards) |
| • Seaport | (one award) |
| • Team Metro | (one award) |



Examples of some of the work recognized include awards in the County’s: **Building Department** for the Master Model Construction “Cookie Cutter” Plan Review Expedite Program, which reduces the permit issuance time frame for this type of construction; the **Communications Department** for its “Miami-Dade Now Transit Special” which focused on educating residents about the benefits of a premium transit system, and for its ACCESS Television Program, an innovative television series on Miami-Dade TV, bringing viewers useful information about how to access County services; the **eGovernment Department** for the development of “My Neighborhood”, which is a new interactive web service that provides citizens with helpful and improved information about their neighborhoods and their real property; the **Miami-Dade Juvenile Assessment Center** for the Post Arrest Diversion Program that offers youth a second chance; the **Office of Performance Improvement** for coordinating an historic countywide Strategic Planning initiative, which will help guide the County in providing valuable and efficient services to residents; the **Miami-Dade Police Department** for its Car Seat Fitting Station Program where parents or drivers are able to receive help with child restraint installation; the **Park and Recreation Department** for its Junior Sailing Program, making the sport of sailing available to the majority of public school-aged children; and **Team Metro** for its Government on the Go Bus, which travels throughout the community providing a wide range of County services. These are just some of the outstanding programs that have been implemented throughout the County receiving NACo awards.

New Southridge Park Stadium



Miami-Dade County Commissioner Dennis C. Moss, District 9 and Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Director Vivian Donnell Rodriguez are joined by members of the Miami Southridge Sr. High School girl’s soccer team and jazz band for the dedication of the new Southridge Park stadium and field house at 11250 SW 192 St., Miami. The 16-acre park site now has a new lighted stadium equipped with six 65-foot light poles and handicapped accessible aluminum bleachers that can seat up to 1,500 sports fans. The new 6,720-square-foot field house contains a concession area, a covered breezeway, office space, an equipment area, restrooms and two team locker rooms with showers. This multi-purpose facility will host football, soccer, and track & field competitions for the neighboring Miami Southridge Sr. High School. Funding for the new stadium and field house included \$1.333 million from the Safe Neighborhood Park Bond program, \$241,000 from impact fees and a \$200,000 Community Development Block Grant.



IT Florida Technology Forum Recognizes Miami-Dade County with Government Technology Award



Miami-Dade County has once again been recognized for its creativity in technology. The IT Florida Technology Forum has recognized the County with the Government Technology Leadership – Public Sector Award. The award recognizes innovative technology initiatives for their contributions to a state or local government agency’s mission accomplishment, service to the public, and cost effectiveness.

The Leadership Award was given to Miami-Dade County for several of the County’s inventive programs. The County prides itself on making government operations more seamless for residents and businesses by providing a magnitude of technology solutions.

“The programs honored by this award are a direct result of the hard work and dedication of so many County employees, including more than 100 employees in the departments of eGovernment, Information Technology,

Procurement Management, and Employee Relations,” said County Manager George M. Burgess. “I congratulate the entire Miami-Dade County family on receiving this impressive award.”

The programs recognized include: **eProcurement**, which is a web-enabled vendor enrollment and solicitations program that was a major breakthrough in improving the way business is conducted with the County, resulting in significant efficiencies to the County by reducing the resources required to prepare and mail bulky solicitation packages; the **Employee Electronic Fileroom** was recognized for offering paperless record keeping, electronic routing and approval of County employee personnel changes, resulting in a secure process that has significantly reduced data entry and related resources; **My Neighborhood/My Home** is an interactive web service recognized for providing County residents helpful and improved information about their neighborhoods through the County’s website in which users are able to find information regarding property assessment, tax collection, crime incidents, registered sexual offenders, code violations, capital improvements, flood information and more; and **Results That Matter** is an effort to improve the County’s web portal that was recognized for allowing for self-service web transactions, making a considerable difference in service to the public and County efficiencies. Each month thousands of transactions are performed electronically by the public including the payment of parking citations, renewal of library books, and ordering of recycling bins.

Gov. Bush recently recognized all Government Technology Award winners at a ceremony in Orlando.

PEOPLE

Working for you

County Employee Uses Her Love for Plants and Trees to Help the County Grow



DERM employee Joy Klein helps a Miami-Dade County resident choose his trees at a recent Adopt-a-Tree event.

Chances are that if there is a volunteer tree-planting event in Miami Dade County, Joy D. Klein, a beloved employee in the County’s Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM), has been involved in one form or another. Her passion for plants bloomed at the early age of five when she started to take care of her mother’s houseplants. By the age of 12, Klein was reading all the horticultural books that she could get her hands on and had transformed her mother’s dining room into a makeshift greenhouse.

Her love for plants and trees grew over the years and as a young student at the University of Michigan, she was drafted by the U.S. Peace Corps to work as a Botanist in Jamaica. There, she wasted no time to conduct several projects including setting the groundwork for future national parks in that Caribbean Island.

Back in the U.S. in the late 80s, she “took root” in Miami-Dade County’s DERM. After Hurricane Andrew hit South Florida, she immediately got to work to develop strategies to replace the crucial loss of trees in Miami Dade County. She administrated the Post Hurricane Forest Restoration, and recently she became the County’s Forest Restoration and Education Coordinator.

Today, she supervises the County’s ever-growing and popular tree canopy replacement program, Adopt-a-Tree. Overseeing this program, the largest of its kind in the history of Florida, is no easy task. However, through the years she still has found time to volunteer with many community organizations, from the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council to Citizens for a Better South Florida. She provides planting support to numerous local schools, churches, neighborhoods and municipalities.

Because of her love for plants and trees, she has grown from a little girl that transformed her mother’s dinning room into a greenhouse to an outstanding professional and member of the Miami-Dade County family, who as a DERM employee and community volunteer, helps to dramatically improve the landscape of the County.

Miami-Dade County Employee Serving Overseas Connects with Colleagues Thanks to Technology

By Miriam Rossi, Building

Technology allows distance to know no boundaries, especially when it comes to communicating across the miles and a world away. A connection to home is crucial for an American soldier stationed in Iraq. One of Miami-Dade County’s own, Capt. Ricardo “Rick” Roig, Manager of Miami-Dade County Building Compliance Support, who is serving overseas in Operation Iraqi Freedom, has been able to feel connected to his hometown by accessing his Miami-Dade County email account.

Roig is the commander of 124 men with the Alpha Company, 124th Infantry with the Army National Guard. This troop is also referred to as the Wolf Pack. When he first logged onto his County e-mail address, he found more than 700 e-mails waiting for him. He has been able to send photos to his Building Department colleagues, showing a slice of life for him and his troops in Ar-Ramadi, Iraq.

There are times when e-mails from Roig are not received for quite a while due to military raids, checkpoint duties and other special operational military missions performed by the Wolf Pack troop. When Roig’s colleagues receive the e-mailed photos, they see the stark backgrounds, giving them a glimpse of the world Roig is now living in – a distinct contrast from their surroundings here in Miami-Dade County. However, to transport some of Miami-Dade’s warm, tropical flavor, along



Capt. Ricardo “Rick” Roig, Manager of Miami-Dade County Building Compliance Support, who is stationed in Iraq serving overseas in Operation Iraqi Freedom, shakes the hand of an Iraqi child.

with greetings to Roig and his troop members, Building Department employees have been continuously sending care packages. In addition, a “Send Your Greetings to Rick and His Troops Day” was held at the Miami-Dade County Herbert S. Saffir Permitting and Inspection Center, where employees and the general public were able to drop-off items in the donation box placed in the main lobby, while posing for digital photos that were e-mailed straight to Roig. Some employees also posed with their hand-written messages to him.

Hopefully, the technological connection will help ease the distance separating Roig and his Wolf Pack troop from their families and friends back home in Florida, as prayers and wishes are being extended across the miles and a world away for their speedy and safe return home.

NEWS

and Notes

MIA Dedicates Newest Runway

By Marc T. Henderson, Aviation

The threatening rain held off as an inaugural aircraft landing marked the dedication of Miami International Airport’s new Northside Runway 8/26, which took place appropriately on August 26 (or 8/26). Miami-Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas, Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, other county, state and federal officials, Miami-Dade County Manager George M. Burgess, Aviation Director Angela Gittens and community leaders gathered for the inaugural aircraft landing on the new runway, which landed at 9:27 a.m. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Administrator Marion Blakey, FAA Regional Administrator Carolyn Blum, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Six Secretary John Martinez and other dignitaries were on the plane.



Miami-Dade County Fire-Rescue trucks salute American Airlines Flight 9601 with water cannons after the plane landed on the new runway. The inaugural landing included some 60 dignitaries from the political, governmental, corporate and community arenas.

Located 800 feet north of the current northernmost runway, the 8,600-foot runway, the fourth for the airport, increases Miami's airfield capacity by approximately 25 percent and extends the ability of the airport to accommodate growth for 10 or more years, while simultaneously decreasing the cost of delays to airlines, passengers and businesses.

The total \$161 million program included the cost of the runway, the associated parallel taxiways, an interior service road, an airfield security gate, aprons for aircraft parking and navigational systems. Runway construction cost \$121 million of the total program.

Construction took place seven days a week for 24 hours a day. The whole project was completed in record time; taking 51 months (15 months for design and 36 months for construction including bid and award) from inception to commissioning against FAA estimated time of 111 months (47 months for design and 64 months for construction). This runway is also one of the least expensive for similar sized runways at less than \$19,000 per linear foot.

“MIA faces the challenge of keeping up with an ever-changing aviation industry in order to continue to contribute to the economic vitality of our community,” said Miami-Dade Mayor Penelas. “The sounds of jets taking off and landing are the sound of tourism, business, trade and jobs. It is the sound of our airport instilling energy into our community.”

“The process leading up to this critical improvement in our airside capacity was an arduous one,” said County Manager George M. Burgess. “We had to justify the need, garner support, prove environmental compatibility, obtain federal funding, bid the project and finally initiate this complicated construction in an active airfield.”

Throughout the past 10 years, only six new runways have opened at large hub airports in the United States.

“This is the first key project in our Capital Improvement Program,” said Aviation Director Gittens. “Even with the decrease in air traffic, we do need that capacity at peak times. This runway will prevent delays and eventually we will be able to increase our flights. It will help us with future development.”

MIA serves more than 30 million passengers, creates 237,421 jobs and generates \$18.5 billion in business revenue each year.

A total of 200 projects worth \$1.2 billion have been completed since the \$4.8 billion Capital Improvement Program began 10 years ago. A total of \$2.6 billion is currently under construction.



Miami-Dade Aviation Director Angela Gittens (center) stands with Miami-Dade County officials during the 4th runway ceremony. They include (L to R): Miami-Dade County Manager George M. Burgess; Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners Transportation Committee Chairman Dennis Moss; Miami-Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas; Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler; County Commissioner José “Pepe” Diaz; and County Commissioner Sally Heyman.

Port of Miami and Panama Canal Authority Sign Agreement to Increase Trade from Asia

By Trenae Floyd, Seaport

Officials at the Dante B. Fascell Port of Miami-Dade and administrators from the Panama Canal Authority entered into an historic agreement recently to help increase trade from Asia. The agreement was in the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The MOU, which was signed by Port of Miami Seaport Director Charles A. Towsley and the Administrator of the Panama Canal Alberto Aleman Zubieta, is expected to boost trade figures from Asia to America’s East Coast via the Panama Canal.



Seaport Director Charles A. Towsley and the Administrator of the Panama Canal, Alberto Alemán Zubieta sign a Memorandum of Understanding that will seek to boost trade along the increasingly important All-Water Route, the global commerce link from Asia to America’s East Coast via the Panama Canal.

“This new partnership is in line with our cargo development strategy,” said Towsley. “We recently met in Panama with their Board members, staff and community leaders, and felt confident that this effort would enhance our overall cargo operation.”

In 2002, imports and exports from the Far East, Asia and the Pacific totaled 12.61 percent of the Port of Miami’s total trade figures. Out of the seven regions that trade with the Port of Miami, this particular region ranked fifth.

Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department, State Department of Environmental Protection Reach Agreement on Injection Well Consent Order

By Frank Calderon, Water and Sewer

The Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (WASD) has come to an agreement with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) on a consent order addressing WASD’s deep injection wells at its South District Wastewater Treatment Plant (SDWWTP). The agreement provides additional protection for the environment, while allowing WASD to continue using the wells and expand treatment capacity at the SDWWTP, acting as an engine for continued economic growth in Miami-Dade County. The agreement was signed on July 22 by Miami-Dade County Commission Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, County Commissioner Natacha Seijas, County Manager George M. Burgess, FDEP Deputy Secretary Allan F. Bedwell, and WASD Director William M. Brant. Also present at the signing was Henry Dean, Executive Director of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).



Present at the signing of the agreement were (L to R): SFWMD Executive Director Henry Dean; WASD Director William M. Brant; Miami-Dade County Manager George M. Burgess; Miami-Dade County Commission Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler; FDEP Deputy Secretary Allan F. Bedwell; Miami-Dade County Commissioner Natacha Seijas; Miami-Dade County Assistant County Manager Pedro G. “Pete” Hernandez.

The consent order safeguards the environment by calling on WASD to further treat wastewater effluent at the SDWWTP prior to discharging it via deep injection wells into the Floridian Aquifer. The State agreed to allow WASD some flexibility, giving WASD time to study several methods of treatment, as long as the method chosen meets state standards.

At the same time, WASD will now be able to use all of its wells -- 13 are currently in use, but four others had not been permitted by the state -- and increase treatment capacity at its SDWWTP. This will provide needed infrastructure to fuel economic growth in Miami-Dade County, particularly in its southernmost areas, which have only in recent years begun to fully recover from Hurricane Andrew in 1992. “This is a win-win for all of us,” said Brant. “We will be allowed to maximize the use of facilities we have already invested in, provide for the growing needs of the County and at the same time, improve upon our very important mission of protecting the environment.”

Bedwell said, “This is the type of agreement that the Governor can stand behind and be very proud of. The plan safeguards South Florida’s natural resources, provides water for environmental restoration and protects the long-term health of this growing regional economy.”

The Consent Order builds toward an integrated water management plan for Miami-Dade County for the next 20 years. It will allow WASD to test several different additional-treatment techniques, in order to determine which method best complies with state regulations and is most cost-effective to implement.

WASD is one of the largest water and sewer utilities in the United States, serving most of Miami-Dade’s 2.3 million residents on a retail or wholesale basis.

AT YOUR *Service*

The Transit Tax is Hard at Work for you

By Aurelia Vasquez, Transit

The People's Transportation Plan is in full gear, putting your half penny to work for you. Several proposed initiatives are in the works, leading up to the PTP's one-year anniversary on November 5th.

Although public transportation service improvements are what most residents associate with the PTP, its legislative and business side is equally impressive. This summer, great strides were made in preparing and expanding access to public transportation for County residents. Important examples are:

- **North Corridor:** The project received a "Recommended" rating from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) after the County provided an updated 20-year financial plan, as required under federal guidelines. The fiscally sound plan must illustrate the County's ability to fund the construction, operation and maintenance of the entire North Corridor alignment, along with the operation and maintenance of the existing system. Prior to the passage of the PTP, the project was rated as "Not Recommended" and was not allowed to continue due to the County's inability meet the FTA fiscal criteria. The County is currently working with the Citizens' Advisory Committee, comprised of local residents, on finalizing the corridor's alignment.
- **Downtown Bus Terminal:** To provide for additional busways and a continuous covered walkway from the Government Center Station to the bus facility, the County issued a notice to proceed for improvements of the existing Bus Terminal between SW 1 Street and Flagler Street and the extension of the facility from Flagler Street to NW 1 Street.
- **Northeast Passenger Activity Center:** To select a location for this transit hub, the Northeast Passenger Activity Center Alternative Analysis study was initiated. The County is set to commence the public involvement plan; it has begun to form a Citizens' Advisory Committee and to schedule public meetings.

The Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust (CITT), the watchdog group over the PTP's half-penny surtax, has been hard at work. With more than 20 meetings this summer, the CITT is steadily advancing several resolutions to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). Most notably, they have reviewed and forwarded the Municipal Interlocal Agreement forms and amendments to the BCC. In August, the County completed the first ever transfer of transit surtax proceeds to 15 municipalities and developed a municipal contacts database to assure responsiveness and prompt assistance to concerned municipalities.

The 90 days prior to the one-year anniversary of the People's Transportation Plan has been and is an exciting time for Miami-Dade County. Recently, the grand opening of the Busway Park & Ride on U.S. 1 and 244 Street was celebrated, paving the way for a dynamic transportation hub in South Dade. And now, as preparations are underway for the second annual Transportation Summit in November, the County will submit a resolution to the CITT supporting the reauthorization of six new Rail Corridors, as outlined in the PTP and will continue to prepare its lobbying effort for federal and state appropriations and legislative action. The complete report may be viewed at www.trafficrelief.com.



Miami-Dade County Commissioner Rebeca Sosa, joined by State Representative Marcos Rubio and CITT Member James Reeder, meet with residents to discuss expansion of public transportation.

There's Never Been a Better Time for Bus Travel

By Aurelia Vasquez, Transit



On Monday, July 21, 2003, several County leaders gathered to help dedicate the Flagami Connection, Miami-Dade's seventh new Metrobus route since the passage of the People's Transportation Plan (PTP). More than 100 senior citizens attended the ceremony, held at the Residential Plaza at Blue Lagoon, Miami's largest assisted living facility.

Among those addressing the group were County Commissioner Rebeca Sosa; Florida House Rep. Marcos Rubio; Carolina Sivoli, Aide to Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz; Virginia Diaz, MDT Assistant Director; Ruby Hemingway-Adams, MDT Assistant Director; and Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust members Lt.Col. Tony Colmenares and former Biscayne Park Mayor James Reeder.

All lauded the PTP's countywide bus service improvement plan and each committed support to its continued success. Since November 5, 2002, Miami-Dade's bus improvements include:

- The Golden Passport program in which FREE public transportation is available to all senior citizens 65 years of age and older.
- Metrobus 24-hour service on 21 routes.
- Execution of 358,000 additional hours of service.
- Implementation of 4.5 million additional service miles.
- Bus service improvements will continue with six new routes planned for fiscal year 2003-04, along with significant improvements to 40 existing routes.

The new Flagami Connection is intended to boost ridership in the Flagami area by serving its major traffic generators, providing a long-needed access route along the Mall of the Americas, West Flagler Street, Tamiami Boulevard, SW 8 Street, SW/NW 57 Avenue, and NW 7 Street, serving Saint Dominic Catholic Church and Pan-American Hospital.

The Flagami Connection (Route 278) began service on Sunday, July 20, 2003. Service along the route runs seven days a week, from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Daytime service is every 30 minutes until 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. on weekends. Evening service is every 40 minutes. In an effort to encourage ridership on the route, service was free of charge from Sunday, July 20 through Sunday, August 3.

For additional information, visit the PTP's website or call 305-375-5194.

Apprenticeship Program Offers Job Opportunities in the Miami-Dade Transit Department

By Judy L. Wilcher-Nelson, Transit

As part of the People's Transportation Plan, Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) has partnered with South Florida Work Force, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS), Transport Workers Union (TWU), Local 291, and the Miami-Dade County Employee Relations Department to provide a unique opportunity for interested individuals to enter a bus mechanic apprenticeship/trainee program.



Miami-Dade Transit personnel work on the refurbishing and maintenance of Metrobuses at MDT's Central Garage.

"This is a highly skilled position with excellent pay, and it's a continuation of the transit-related jobs that will become available as we implement the People's Transportation Plan. We are making good on our promise of more jobs," said MDT Director Roosevelt Bradley.

Applicants for the apprenticeship/trainee program for bus mechanics must have a high school diploma or GED and will need to undergo background screenings. Classes are free for all who qualify under the program guidelines. All MDCPS classes are open to the public. Those who do not pass the pre-screening process for sponsorship can still register and pay to attend the class.

The 12-month training program will be offered through MDCPS at Miami Lakes Educational Center and Robert Morgan Vocational Technical Institute. Those who qualify for South Florida Workforce sponsorship must then complete six months of classes before being screened for six months of on-the-job training at MDT. A probationary period will follow.

To be screened, visit any South Florida Work Force One-Stop Career Center. For more information and the nearest One-Stop Center location, call 1-877-872-JOBS (5627).

DIRECT

from the District

District 1

Commissioner Ferguson welcomes elected officials of newly incorporated City of Miami Gardens

This summer, Commissioner Betty T. Ferguson joined local dignitaries and residents to welcome the newly elected Mayor and City Council for the recently incorporated City of Miami Gardens at the city’s first official council meeting. With over 100,000 residents and ranked as the third largest municipality in Miami-Dade County, the new city officially opened for business on July 24, 2003.

“The City of Miami Gardens has many dynamic qualities and the residents can look forward to a very prosperous future,” said Commissioner Ferguson. “The area has a strong economy, a growing population and many thriving businesses.”



During the Election Day celebration on January 28, 2003, Commissioner Ferguson (second from left) poses with, from left, community activist and current city employee Lillie Odom, Miami Gardens Mayor Shirley Gibson and Evelyn Greer, Mayor of Pinecrest.

District 2

Commissioner Rolle helps students, families with back-to-school donations



Commissioner Rolle gives school supplies and a friendly handshake to one of the young participants during his annual Back to School Book Bag and Food Giveaway.

For many parents of school children, the end of summer means getting ready for the new academic year with visits to the doctor, shopping for supplies and other responsibilities. Often times, there are families whose budgets are limited and they find it difficult to meet these demands each year. But with the help of Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle’s annual “Back to School Book Bag and Food Giveaway,” many students and their families received some much-needed support for the new school year.

Book bags, school supplies and food were distributed at Griffing Park in North Miami on August 23, one week prior to the first day of the 2003-04 school year. To prepare for the annual giveaway, Commissioner Rolle and his staff contacted various Haitian-American, non-

profit social service agencies to locate children from economically disadvantaged families.

The Commissioner’s office received donations from a variety of local merchants and organizations including Target®, Daily Bread, Inc., Island TV, Miami Children’s Hospital and Glacial Ice Cream. The children selected were between the ages of five to 17 and are registered with Miami-Dade County Public Schools.



Commissioner Rolle helps a child choose which color book bag he’ll use for the new school year.



Commissioner Rolle assists a mother and her child with school supplies and food donations.

District 3

Chairperson Carey-Shuler participates in music hall groundbreaking ceremony

This summer, Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler joined community leaders and members of the Miami-Dade County staff at the groundbreaking ceremony for the long-awaited music hall at the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, 6161 NW 22 Avenue, in Liberty City.

The African Cultural Arts Center, formerly known as the Model City Cultural Arts Center, was established in 1975 as Miami’s first dedicated cultural arts learning space. The center has become a facility with a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary arts program that currently has 200 children attending daily music classes.

“This center will provide the necessary accommodations for young people to learn, develop their scholarship-winning talents and let their creative energies free,” said Chairperson Carey-Shuler. “I look forward to attending upcoming productions at this new facility.”

This 5,065-square-foot facility will house the rapidly expanding music program at the center. It will include a tiered orchestra/choral area, soundproof practice rooms, teacher’s offices, instrument storage rooms, sound and lighting capabilities and restrooms. Construction is expected to be completed by July 2004.



Melton Mustafa, Jr., Music Instructor/Jazz Band Director, with jazz band students.



Howard Gregg, Ass’t Dir. of Development; Jack Kardys, Ass’t Dir. of Operations; Vivian Donnell Rodriguez, Parks & Recreation Department Director; Miami- Dade County Commission Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler; Shirley Lafleur, Deputy District Director, Congressman Kendrick Meeks’ Office; Eddy Gonzalez, President of Zurqui Construction Services; Representative from Judson & Partners, Architect Firm and Marshall Davis, Director at the African Heritage Cultural Art Center.

District 4

Commissioner Sally Heyman hard at work restoring Pelican Harbor Marina



Miami-Dade Commissioner Sally A. Heyman, District 4, is making a concerted effort to upgrade area parks in her district. Pelican Harbor Marina is currently at the top of her list. A total of \$876,000 has been allocated to rebuild boat ramps, create new walkways to the fishing and observation pier, upgrade signage, add additional landscaping and install a fence with a computerized keyless entry into the marina.

The project also includes the addition of 50 boat moorings to the marina to accommodate the rise in occupancy. A new tour boat was recently added to run tours to the surrounding

islands, and the current restaurant building will be demolished to make way for future upgrades to the facility.

“Once completed, Pelican Harbor Marina will have a wide variety of features available for all residents of Miami-Dade County to enjoy,” said Commissioner Heyman.

Haulover Park was Commissioner Heyman’s last project prior to Pelican Harbor. Upgrades to Haulover Park included the construction of a new multi-purpose building that will house beach operations, lifeguard equipment and beach rescue support services. This project is part of a park renovation initiative worth an estimated cost of \$24 million.

District 5

Commissioner Barreiro introduces “The Royal Rooster” to Little Havana



Commissioner Barreiro (second from left) and Rene Rodriguez (right), Director of the Miami-Dade Housing Agency, unveil El Gallo Real to the applause of area residents.

On July 10, County Commissioner Bruno A. Barreiro introduced a new, colorful feathered friend to the Little Havana community. “El Gallo Real” (“The Royal Rooster” in English), a six-foot, two-inch high sculpture of the popular farm animal, was unveiled to a crowd of admirers from Martin Fine Villas, Haley Sofge Towers and Robert King High Towers, three county-owned public housing properties in Little Havana that house more than 1,000 elderly residents. El Gallo Real was named in a contest among residents from the facilities and was installed in an open area on the grounds of the communities.

Commissioner Barreiro donated \$2,750 from his office funds to have the piece of artwork crafted by world-renowned sculptor Lazaro Valdes and custom-painted by local artist Pedro Damian. El Gallo Real is the latest in a series of popular rooster sculptures by Valdes and Damian that comprises the Art Under Bridge Group project, which has been sponsored by business and community groups throughout Little Havana in an effort to beautify the area.

“This project has done a wonderful job of adding a cultural flair to Little Havana, and I thought that these senior residents should also have something like El Gallo Real in their community to brighten up their days,” said Commissioner Barreiro.

El Gallo Real is decked out in a guayabera and even has a Cuban cigar in his beak. Residents affectionately welcomed the bird to their neighborhood with hugs and kisses. The sculpture may tour other public housing communities within District 5 in the coming months.

District 6

Commissioner Sosa Participates in National Night Out; Holds Ribbon Cutting at Brothers to the Rescue Park

Commissioner Rebeca Sosa joined the Schenley Park Homeowners Association Citizen’s Crime Watch on August 5 to celebrate the 20th Annual “National Night Out Against Crime.”

Numerous residents from the area surrounding the park, located at the corner of SW 27 Street and 57 Avenue, joined law enforcement agencies, community groups, businesses and local officials and McGruff, the Crime Dog, to send a message to criminals that they are “united and fighting back,” said Commissioner Sosa.

The event included the National Anthem sung by Commissioner Sosa, face painting, hot dogs, snow cones, cookies, cotton candy, music and other special performances.

This summer, Commissioner Rebeca Sosa also held a ribbon cutting ceremony on June 11 to celebrate a new parking lot at Brothers to the Rescue Park, located at 7200 Coral Way in south Miami-Dade.

Parents, coaches and neighbors of the Flagami baseball league approached Commissioner Sosa when she was first elected to office in 2001 to express the urgent need for a parking lot so that children would not have to cross Coral Way to attend practice. A car had hit and killed a child just a few months earlier.

Commissioner Sosa immediately took action to arrange construction of a new parking lot that would provide parents and children with safer access to the park. She was presented with an over-sized plaque in appreciation of her support.

“This is an issue that we had been tackling for years,” said Park Director Jorge Monjes. “Commissioner Sosa made sure this became a reality and for that, we are very grateful.”



Children from the Flagami baseball league present to Commissioner Sosa a plaque featuring Flagami baseball league team photos. Miami-Dade County Parks Director Vivian Donnell Rodriguez was also in attendance.

DIRECT

from the District

District 7

Commissioner Jimmy Morales Previews Future “Ludlam Trail”; Helps Deliver Nearly Seven Tons of Food to Liberty City



Commissioner Morales stands on future “Ludlam Trail”

On Saturday, August 9, Commissioner Jimmy Morales joined residents from the area surrounding the seven-mile corridor known as the “Ludlam Trail” for an event honoring Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen for her efforts to secure federal funding for the Ludlam Trail renovation project. The “rails to trails” project, if completed, will convert an old railroad track founded by Henry Flagler that runs parallel to SW 69 Avenue into a seven-mile pedestrian and bicycling trail. The trail would run from the Dadeland Mall area to Miami International Airport.

To kick off the event, Commissioner Morales, Florida State Representative Julio Robaina, South Miami Vice Mayor Mary Scott Russell and area residents walked a one-mile section of SW 69 Avenue beginning at 60th Street. Following the walk near the railroad, a special message from Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen was delivered by her aide Gustavo Losa stating that a \$500,000 request has been introduced in this year’s U.S. Interior Department Appropriations bill. The bill has already passed the House and is working its way through the Senate. While this funding does not guarantee that construction will begin, this money hopefully will allow local planners to develop a comprehensive plan for construction of the trail.

“The turnout was a strong indication that there is a real commitment from all of the organizations involved,” said Morales. “This is the kind of project that requires time to identify the funding sources, but definitely deserves our attention. I am optimistic of being able to return in the coming years to celebrate a groundbreaking for this true grassroots effort.”

Also in August, a truck from Nashville, Tennessee with 12 pallets of food (the equivalent of nearly seven tons) pulled up to Curley’s House of Style/Hope Relief

Food Bank in Liberty City to fill the empty shelves of the non-profit agency that helps fill the empty stomachs of Miami-Dade County’s poor and homeless population. This highly anticipated delivery could have been a missed opportunity, had it not been for 14 generous donors and the fundraising efforts of Commissioner Jimmy Morales.

Curley’s, which has been feeding and clothing the poor and needy since 1999, was about to run out of food recently until Feed the Children, a Nashville-based benevolence organization, offered to donate the food. The only catch was that Curley’s had to pay the discounted cost of \$1,500 charged by Charlie Wheeler Trucking Company for the shipping. Curley’s asked Commissioner Morales for help, and the Commissioner sought out a group of individuals and private companies who agreed to foot the bill.

Hundreds of residents lined up outside of Curley’s House of Style as early as 8:00 a.m. on August 24 - four hours before the truck’s scheduled delivery.

“While I am proud to say that for now hundreds of families are less hungry today than they were yesterday, it is clear to me that there is an enormous amount of work that needs to be done to assure that Miami-Dade County families do not go hungry anymore,” said Commissioner Morales.

“I will continue working closely with Curley’s in the upcoming months toward finding solutions to this critical problem.”



Commissioner Morales presents \$1500 check to Curley’s House of Style.

District 8

Summer was far from slow in District 8

Commissioner Sorenson’s district office recently acquired a van that was put into service to provide fast and effective responses to constituent concerns. The “Community Action Team” van was piloted through the summer by District 8 intern, University of Florida student and Palmetto Bay resident Isabel Dao, who identified and addressed over 200 concerns ranging from fading street signs, to potholes, to roadside trash and abandoned shopping carts.

“Things that may seem minor, like faded street signs, are actually very important to the quality and safety of our community. Proactively addressing these problems has been a priority of mine,” explained Commissioner Sorenson.

Commissioner Sorenson recently joined Commissioner Moss, Asistant County Manager Alex Munoz and Team Metro South Supervisor Henry Davis for the grand opening of the Team Metro office at the Cutler Ridge Mall. The new location should provide greater access to Team Metro products and services like baby stroller permits, passport applications and more. The Team Metro South office number remains the same – 305-234-1510.

Commissioner Sorenson also recently sponsored a resolution unanimously approved by the Board of County Commissioners that calls on the Miami-Dade Congressional delegation to oppose the Federal Government’s proposed closure of the Homestead Base Exchange. The Base Exchange, or BX Mart, provides a wide variety of products and services exclusively to military personnel and their families and is an important asset for military families trying to make ends meet.

“Our dedicated men and women in uniform and their families rely on the Base Exchange, and closing it now would be a terrible blow to our community,” explained Commissioner Sorenson.

Before the summer recess, the Board of County Commissioners authorized the creation of the Naranja Lakes Community Redevelopment Agency in South Dade. The Naranja Lakes CRA, championed by Commissioner Sorenson, is the only such revitalization agency exclusively serving unincorporated Miami-Dade. The catalyst for redevelopment in Naranja Lakes will be a 200-acre development following

“traditional neighborhood design” principles that emphasizes mixed-use development, green space and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.

Also this summer, the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser’s office started offering enhanced customer service to farmers in South Dade applying for agricultural classification.

“Farmers in South Dade are working hard to make a living. They need convenient access to the tools and talent of our Property Appraiser’s office here in South Dade,” said Commissioner Sorenson. The Property Appraiser’s staff at the South Dade Government Center (10710 SW 211 St.) will provide in-person and phone consultation assistance.



Team Metro South Supervisor Henry Davis, Commissioner Sorenson, Commissioner Moss and Assistant County Manager Alex Munoz at the grand opening of the Team Metro office at Cutler Ridge Mall.

The Miami-Dade Property Appraiser is an important agency for the agricultural community. An official agricultural classification on commercially active farm property can mean thousands of dollars in tax savings to a qualified property owner.

District 9

Commissioner Dennis C. Moss Kicks Off Mom and Pop Small Business Grant Program for Homestead and Florida City

On August 1, County Commissioner Dennis C. Moss kicked off his “Mom and Pop” Small Business Grant Program for businesses in disadvantaged neighborhoods from the Homestead/Florida City area. The program will award a total of \$50,000 to small businesses within the two municipalities that are also included in the Empowerment Zone, Enterprise Zone and Targeted Urban Area (TUA) – areas designated by Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida as having economic development needs.

The Homestead/Florida City program is an extension of an initiative begun by Commissioner Moss in March, when he made grant money available to small businesses in the South Miami-Dade communities of Richmond Heights, West Perrine, Goulds, South Miami Heights and Naranja. A five-member selection committee appointed by Commissioner Moss will choose grant recipients from applications that were submitted between August 4 and August 15. Program participants may receive a maximum grant of \$10,000, depending on the number of qualified recipients selected.

The funds will not be paid directly to the grant recipients, but rather to vendors providing the recipients with services such as business equipment, interior renovations, marketing and advertising, insurance, security system installation, code violation compliance or any other justifiable business need.

“The Mom and Pop Small Business Grant Program is an opportunity for some small businesses to obtain the resources they need to stay in business, and for others, it gives them the chance to overcome certain hurdles in their way so they can grow

and expand,” said Commissioner Moss.

The Mom and Pop Grant Program is a joint partnership between Neighbors and Neighbors Association (NANA), a non-profit economic development agency, and the Urban Revitalization Task Force, a County agency charged with overseeing the County’s economic development funding process and revitalizing the County’s TUA.



In attendance at Commissioner Dennis C. Moss’ South District Office in Florida City for the kickoff of the Commissioner’s Homestead/Florida City Mom and Pop Small Business Grant Program were, from left: Leroy Jones, Executive Director of Neighbors and Neighbors Association (N.A.N.A.); Winnie George, Program Coordinator, Miami-Dade County Urban Revitalization Task Force; Frieda L. Brown, Vice President of Community Relations, Totalbank; Florida City Mayor Otis Wallace; Commissioner Moss; Homestead Mayor Roscoe Warren; David Dixon, Assistant Vice President, Bank of America; Dipchand Khadar, Vice President, Citibank; Willie Carpenter, Senior Vice President, Community Bank of Florida.

District 11

Commissioner Martinez hosts first Health and Safety Awareness Expo

Some of Miami-Dade County’s 539,000 uninsured residents received a helping hand recently when Commissioner Joe A. Martinez hosted his inaugural “Joe A. Martinez Health & Safety Awareness Expo” at the Miami-Dade County Fair and Expo Center on August 30. The pre-Labor Day event was held to provide health and safety services to uninsured residents, free of charge, in an upbeat atmosphere.

“Providing a service that will improve the health and safety of Miami-Dade residents, particularly the disadvantaged, is one of the main reasons we are in public service,” said Commissioner Martinez. “The residents who attended the Expo today received a variety of medical screenings, services and information that has and will continue to benefit their lives.”



Commissioner Martinez and Sparky, mascot for the Miami-Dade County Fire-Rescue Department.

A variety of healthcare vendors provided free services including immunizations for school children, HIV/AIDS screenings, skin cancer screenings, safety awareness tips, car seat installation and home security tips.

The Miami-Dade County Fire Rescue Department also offered free fingerprinting for the elderly, which will help provide medical facilities and law enforcement officials with important information about seniors age 65 and older or people with mental disorders.

“We plan to have this Health and Safety Expo every year with the hope that it will get bigger and better each time,” said Commissioner Martinez. “We were operating on a limited budget this year, yet we still managed to secure participation from a variety of organizations. Their contribution made a big difference in the presentation of our first expo.”



Commissioner Martinez and young volunteers at the Health and Safety

In addition to the various exhibits and health screenings, several demonstrations and performances by local organizations were featured. These included Florida International University’s Judo Team, Zumba-Kalor, a dance exercise routine by Zone Fitness, Senior Aerobics by Gold’s Gym and the Miami Heat’s mascot Burnie, who signed autographs and took pictures with attendees.

District 12

Commissioner Diaz seeks support abroad for County’s bid for permanent location of FTAA Secretariat



As Chairman of the County’s International Trade Consortium and spokesman for the Board of Directors of the Miami Ministerial and Americas Business Forum, Commissioner José “Pepe” Diaz has logged thousands of travel miles this year to meet with dignitaries throughout the western hemisphere in his effort to gain support for Miami-Dade County’s selection as the permanent Secretariat (headquarters) of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA Ministerial and Business Forum, held in Miami this November for the first time, will draw political, business and community leaders from the 34 western hemisphere countries who will eventually cast votes for the secretariat’s location. The FTAA trade agreement, which would eliminate trade barriers between the 34 participating countries, is expected to be established in 2005.

Commissioner Diaz has traveled to Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia and Argentina to make presentations to government and business leaders in those countries that illustrate why Miami-Dade County is the best choice for the permanent site of the Secretariat.

Commissioner Diaz has also traveled to Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. to secure funding for the event and to discuss with state and federal officials the positive economic impact the FTAA would have on the County and South Florida.

“The location of the permanent Secretariat in Miami-Dade County would reap untold benefits for our economy, our businesses and our residents, and I will do everything in my power to help us win this designation,” said Commissioner Diaz.

YOU

Should Know...

October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month...

The month of October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Miami-Dade County residents can seek assistance through Miami-Dade County’s Advocates for Victims Office, Family & Victims Services and the Family Builders Divisions within the Department of Human Services. Families of domestic violence can get help through the many programs that are available, such as a safe haven for victims through “Safespace.” Along with shelter, victims of domestic violence can receive food, relocation money, counseling, job placement, education and much more. Abusers also can get needed counseling through the Family and Victim Services program. If you or anyone you know is being beaten, kept isolated from friends and family, controlled financially, put down, and/or abused emotionally, they are victims of domestic violence. To find out more about the programs available, call 305-375-5416. The answer to your needs can be a phone call way! Don’t wait until it’s too late to call.

When Riding the South Florida Roadways, Dial 511 for Traffic Information

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) in South Florida has celebrated one million calls to its’ 511 Traffic and Traveler Information Service Center, one of the fastest growing 511 services in the nation. South Florida’s 511 service, launched in July 2002, offers around-the-clock, real-time traffic information on road conditions, construction, and congestion. A new Traffic Management Center, scheduled for completion in January 2004, will provide state-of-the-art technology to gather information from roadside cameras, police scanners, FDOT Road Rangers, FHP, and road sensors to enhance the 511 traffic information service currently in place in South Florida. Already ranked as the third largest in the nation in terms of call volume, 511 operations in South Florida serve as a model for other states initiating the new traffic and traveler information service.

For additional information, visit www.sunguide.org.

Miami-Dade County Black Affairs Advisory Board Retreat Yields Action Plan



By Retha Boone, Black Affairs Advisory Board

Pictured during the Black Affairs Advisory Board retreat are: Chris Johnson (representing the Black Heritage Planning Committee); Program Officer Retha Boone; BAAB members Jacques Laroche; Jason Murray, Esq.; Dr. Marietta Mischia; Dr. Franklin Sands; Didier Fabien and Office of Community Relations’ Executive Director Dr. Larry Capp.

The Miami-Dade County Black Affairs Advisory Board has been quite active over the past few months. The Board, which is composed of civic activists who are appointed by members of the Board of County Commissioners, recently held a retreat to review its Strategic Plan and begin developing an action plan aimed at defining its direction for the upcoming year.

The Board focused on determining how they can be better advocates on behalf of Miami Dade County’s Black community including Caribbean American residents. The group intends to present their findings to the Miami Dade County Board of Commissioners. The plan includes reviewing the progress of education, health, economics, housing and law enforcement issues and how they impact Miami-Dade County’s black citizens.

A representative from the Black Heritage Planning Committee also attended the retreat to determine how they could better work with the Board in “spreading the word” about the rich cultural heritage of African-Americans. The Black Heritage Planning Committee is a subcommittee of the Black Affairs Advisory Board. It is composed of Miami-Dade County employees representing various county departments.

Also, the Board held elections in June. Dr. Franklin Sands, a community activist with more than 30 years of experience in senior and executive level management was elected chair, succeeding Dr. Marietta Mischia. Dr. Sands will be assisted by several other officers including: South Dade activist, Rev. Joe Sumpter, who was elected Vice-Chairperson and was appointed by Commissioner Dennis Moss; Haitian-American activist Marie Jose Ledan, who was elected Secretary and appointed by Commissioner Dorrin Rolle; educator and consultant Priscilla Dames, who was elected Parliamentarian and appointed by Commission Chairperson Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler; and South Dade businessman Jacques Laroche who was elected treasurer and was appointed by Commissioner Katy Sorenson.

Other members of the Black Affairs Advisory Board include Dr. Anna Price, who was appointed by Commissioner Betty Ferguson; Dr. Marietta Mischia, the immediate past chairperson, who was appointed by Commissioner Natacha Seijas; Didier Fabien, who serves as chair of the Black Heritage Planning Committee and was appointed by Commissioner Joe A. Martinez; Attorney Jason Murray, who was appointed by Commissioner José “Pepe” Diaz; and Juvais Harrington, who was appointed by Commissioner Sally Heyman.

Elections Department Doing its Part, Asking Residents to do Theirs

By Seth Kaplan, Elections



Constance Kaplan

Now it’s your turn. That’s what Elections Department leaders are telling Miami-Dade residents at voter registration and education events throughout the County. Supervisor of Elections Constance Kaplan wants to register as many qualified voters as possible, yet she knows what’s really important isn’t just getting people to register, but encouraging them to actually vote.

“Living in a democracy is a privilege,” Kaplan said, “and our democracy works best when we all participate. The Elections Department reaches out to the community by registering voters and teaching them about iVotronic balloting, but the public has to do its part by actually showing up on election day.”

Kaplan said many residents don’t realize that elections are not a “once-every-four-years event.”

“There’s an election somewhere in Miami-Dade every month - in our cities, towns and villages,” she said. “And while those elections might not get the same attention that a presidential election gets, they are just as important. It’s important to choose our president, but it is just as important to choose our local and state leaders, who also make decisions that impact our lives in many ways.”

Kaplan recently moved to Miami-Dade County from Chicago, bringing 33 years of election experience to Miami-Dade. She has monitored elections around the world

and is excited about the challenge of continuing to build confidence among Miami-Dade County's voters.



Elections Department employees celebrating Women’s Equality Day - the anniversary of when women in America won the right to vote - by registering new voters and teaching voters how to use iVotronic machines at an outreach event.

“Let’s face it,” she said. “Change is never easy, and big changes - like the change from punch cards to electronic voting - can be intimidating at first. But with each successive election we hold, voters are becoming more and more comfortable with the system. Even some people who were worried at first now say they can’t imagine voting any other way!”

And when you go out to vote, don’t be surprised if you see Kaplan herself at your polling place, getting feedback from pollworkers and voters.

“We are always sharing ideas about how to improve the process with other election officials around the country, but it’s also important to talk with the people who are what this is really all about: our neighbors here in Miami-Dade who vote and work at the polls.”

IN YOUR *Community*

Miami-Dade County Employees Lend a Helping Hand to Our Community During United Way 2003 Campaign KickOff

By Phares Poliard, Communications

On a rainy day in August, Miami-Dade County's partnership with the United Way reached a new level when about 320 County employees joined thousands of other volunteers at the United Way of Miami-Dade 2003 Campaign Kickoff Project "Big Hearts in Little Haiti". Rain or shine, Miami-Dade County's enthusiasm regarding the success of this project was unstoppable. The effort employees put into revitalizing the Haitian Freedom Garden at North Miami Avenue and a half-mile strip of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, between I-95 and Northwest Second Avenue, was another step in the County's continuing commitment to the betterment of this community.

Miami-Dade County's partnership with the United Way has a long history. For more than 20 years, this partnership has been reinforced annually by County employees' commitment to this cause. Employee participation throughout the last few years has marked significant increases. In addition to the number of United Way community projects sponsored or coordinated by Miami-Dade County, last year alone, the County's total financial contributions to the United Way of Miami-Dade reached \$1.6 million, the largest amount the County has ever raised. The County's goal for this year is to raise \$1.7 million, or a five percent increase over last year's contributions.



(L to R) Danny Guerra and Nancy Randle-Durant, both from Team Metro, showing the true nature of Miami-Dade County's love for the community during United Way Kickoff Project "Big Hearts in Little Haiti".

"I am proud of all of the members of the Miami-Dade County family who participated in the United Way kick-off work project in Little Haiti," said Miami-Dade County Manager George M. Burgess. "I am always impressed by the County's spirit and dedication to give back to the community."

Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation Department Host to USA Track & Field National Junior Olympics -- Nationwide Records Broken; About \$20 Million Pumped into Local Economy

By Laura Phillips, Park and Recreation

Every champion knows that to be the best, you've got to beat the best - and the best were out in record-breaking numbers as Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Department welcomed 7,306 of the nation's top youth athletes for the 2003 USA Track & Field (USATF) National Junior Olympics at Tropical Park Stadium, July 29-August 3. Parks' own Metro Dade Track Club came away victorious, shattering national records and claiming 24 medals in one of the toughest meets in Junior Olympics history.

Athletes from as far away as Alaska and Hawaii, to our own state of Florida, battled through six straight days of track and field events, which included everything from hurdles to high jumps to javelin throws and long jumps. At just 10 years old, the Metro Dade Track Club's Rannell "Speedy" Hall, lived up to his name by becoming the Bantam Boys division's fastest competitor in the nation and in Junior Olympics history, setting a new record of 25.83 in the 200-meter dash and 12.75 in the 100 meter dash. Hall's sweeping victories earned him the title of "Verizon Outstanding Athlete of the Meet" and the 4x100 meter relay team, which he anchored, broke their own standing national record with a time of 51.63. Teammate, 12-year-old, Zakeya Stinson also took a gold in the Youth Girls shot put.

"By reaching the Junior Olympics, all of the athletes that participated in this event are winners," said Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Director Vivian Donnell Rodriguez. "They have shown themselves to be up to the challenge of playing against their own highest standards, testing their skills, endurance and tenacity."

Silver medal wins went to Track Club members Gordon Warner in the Youth Boys 400 meter run and Misti Barber in the Young Women's discus (with a throw of 42.88 meters). A bronze title went to Shaquille Kears in the 200-meter dash. Other Track Club medallists included Bantam Boys competitors Xavier Mackey (4th place, shot



(Pictured in the center lane) As the anchor for the Metro Dade Track Club's Bantam Boys 4x100 relay team, Rannell Hall cinched another gold win.

put); Leo Simmons (5th place, 400 meter run); and Larry Farlow (8th place, 100 meter dash); Crystal Miller, (5th place, Midget Girls discus); Ricky Jean Francois (4th place, Young Men's shot put); and the Youth Boys' 4x100 relay team (4th place).

More than 10,000 visitors, including family members, friends and coaches joined the athletes for the competition. It is estimated that the event generated more than \$20 million in revenue for Miami-Dade County.

"Extensive planning and a remarkable hard-working staff were key in making this event both memorable and successful," said Donnell Rodriguez. "I'd like to congratulate our volunteers throughout the County for donating their time

Miami Art Museum Receives Major Grant for Education Programs

By Gabriel Riera, Miami Art Museum



Miami-Dade County children participating in "Second Saturdays Are Free For Families Program", one of Miami Art Museum's beneficial programs for youth in the community.

Miami Art Museum (MAM) has received a \$50,000 grant from the Heckscher Foundation for Children to fund the expansion of MAM's educational programs for young people. MAM's arts education program is the largest in Miami-Dade County, impacting more than 475,000 visitors since its inception in 1996. Miami Art Museum runs four educational programs for students K-12, a museum-school partnership involving tours in the galleries, monthly free programming for families, an annual, scholastic award exhibition of student work from Miami Dade County and a summer outreach program.

"This is the third generous grant we've received from the distinguished Heckscher Foundation for Children in New York. We're grateful for this national vote of confidence that acknowledges the quality of our educational programs as well as our reach in the community," said MAM Director Suzanne Delehanty.

The grant from the Heckscher Foundation has allowed MAM to expand the scope of its educational programs. One of those programs, MAM in the Neighborhood, the museum's summer outreach program, which completed its third year, has grown into a countywide endeavor, signaling a strong connection between MAM and the community. The program uses interpretation techniques to develop visual literacy and stimulate critical thinking.

As it moves into the 21st century, Miami Art Museum continues to embrace its role as a civic institution that compels, challenges and inspire visitors as it encourages independent thought and a deeper understanding of the world. Previous student participants in the program are now working at MAM during the summer as apprentices, instructing their peers and generating the type of positive experience that has led them to make a strong commitment to education in their lives. As one student wrote in a thank-you letter to MAM, "...it was the best summer of my life..."

and talents to this worthy community effort."

Among the volunteers were more than 500 Miami-Dade County employees from 14 County departments who assisted with everything from transportation to manning concession areas, ticket booths and security checkpoints.

Miami-Dade Park and Recreation is no stranger to USATF events. Tropical Park was also the site for the prestigious 2002 USATF Youth Athletic Championships. In mid August, the department hosted the 2003 USATF Associations Workshop at Miami's Airport Marriott.

The USATF National Junior Olympics is the largest and most visible developmental track & field program in the world for youth ages 7 to 18. This event marks the final USATF youth track and field meet of the year.

PROGRAMS

for You

Government on the Go Bus... Continuing to Bring Quality Services Directly to County Residents

You may see it in the parking lot of your neighborhood library, in your local shopping center or mall, at a hospital, a school, or maybe even in the park. It's a big bus with pictures and logos of County services painted all over it. What is it used for and why is it there?



"It" is the "Government on the Go Bus" -- the latest method being utilized by Miami-Dade County to literally bring services close to the people it serves. The bus is staffed by Team Metro personnel who provide direct services such as selling baby stroller parking permits, bus/rail tokens and passes, or dog tags. Staff is also able to accept passport applications right on site, as long as residents have the necessary documentation.

The bus also serves as a perfect place for individuals to get information about County services. It is equipped with laptops that allow residents to connect to the County's website. While visiting the bus, the public can share or express concerns regarding their neighborhoods to be forwarded to the appropriate County agency so that it may be addressed.

In addition to the regular services offered, the "Go Bus" partners with many County and state agencies to bring added services to the residents. While visiting many senior centers, the bus has partnered with the State Department of Motor Vehicles, issuing IDs as an inexpensive document of identification. The bus served as one of the designated sites for the Homestead Exemption program during its season, and it partnered with the Miami-Dade Transit Agency, ensuring that senior citizens collected their Golden Passports by the September 2003 deadline.

You can find the monthly schedule for the Go Bus at www.miamidade.gov. Should you want to schedule the bus in your neighborhood, please contact Maria De La Milera, of Team Metro, at 305-375-5856 or e-mail address: mdm1@miamidade.gov. The Government on the Go Bus...bringing County government closer to its residents!!!!

The New Face of Public Housing

By Javier Morejon, Housing



(L to R) Maintenance workers work on the ceiling lights at Singer Plaza, one of Miami-Dade Housing Agency's public housing developments.

These improvements allow MDHA to go beyond its mission to provide public housing residents with safe, affordable, decent low-income housing. The new look showcases County properties and dispels the myth that low-income housing has to be mundane.

MDHA is faced with the challenge of maintaining properties that are several decades old. With funding from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, improvements made to these sites have included an upgraded fire alarm system, along with the installation of new flooring, mailboxes, roofs, and flood control barriers.

The agency also undertook a remodeling of community centers, senior and childcare centers, and lobbies. Improvements, completed mostly with in-house staff, were made to 40 sites. Residents at some of these sites were also given a chance to decide which colors would be used for the exterior painting.

MDHA's Public Housing division provides property management services for approximately 10,000 units of public housing in 100 family and elderly developments, including housing for the disabled and scattered sites. Division staff includes professional property managers and certified maintenance mechanics and support personnel who provide residents with the best level of customer-service -- using limited federal operating funds -- to achieve quality housing.

"Curb appeal" -- the term refers to the physical changes made to the exterior of a property to improve its visual appearance and make it more appealing. As part of an effort to improve the curb appeal of Miami-Dade Housing Agency's (MDHA) developments, the agency has repainted buildings, spruced up landscaping, repaved parking lots, and added new security features that present a brand new appearance for several public housing developments. MDHA has also improved interior features, giving many of these developments a complete facelift.

What's New Online in Miami-Dade County?

Important Information for Contractors:

Miami-Dade County contractors can now renew and pay for their licenses online. Visa or MasterCard credit cards are accepted for payment. The renewal notice and a valid e-mail address are the only other requirements. For more information, please go to: <http://ipas.miamidade.gov/CLRA/CLRDisclaimer.jsp>.

What Parents Need to Know - School Boundaries and Flood Zones:

Web resources newly available through the Miami-Dade school district's Internet portal, www.dadeschools.net offer stores of vital information about the County's public schools. It includes a school map/locator at dadeschools.net/locator that lets users enter a home or business address and find the nearest schools. A joint service of the County and the school district, the County GIS site also identifies area commissioners as well as nearby police and fire stations, courts, libraries, parks and hurricane evacuation zones.

Enterprise Technology Services -- Portal 2: This Time It's Personal

The New miamidade.gov Packs Bigger Punch with Personalized Content

By Ruth Kimbrough-Bent, Enterprise Technology Services

International recognition. Award-winning online services. Leaders of online government.

How do you top all that?

By getting personal.

That's what Portal 2 -- is all about. So over the last 12 months, the Enterprise Technology Services Department, in collaboration with IBM Corporation, has been busy re-packaging portal content, transforming the way the web portal looks and performs.



Portal 2 has a new look that's decidedly more, well, "Miami". The modest blue and beige of the first portal has given way to more vivid hues of blue and green. Miami's celebrated skyline remains a central part of the design. The new portal holds on to mainstays such as the "Find a Service" and "Find a Department" features; the Resident, Business, Visitor and Employee affinity groups; and the ever-growing portfolio of online services.

But the most dramatic change is in the way portal content is handled. "Our portal has grown by leaps and bounds," said Judi Zito, Chief Information Officer for Miami-Dade County. "But there is such a thing as TMI -- too much information. You run the risk of losing visitors by giving them too little or too much." That's why the Enterprise Technology Services Department has shifted to a personalized approach to serving up miamidade.gov, employing an innovation called 'portlets'.

Portlets, Zito explains, are personalized windows of news and information that users select when they register on the new portal. By choosing from about 30 interest categories, users can get a customized "window treatment" that hones in on the topics they're concerned about. They can also subscribe to a weekly e-mail with news and information on the topics they chose.

Leaps and Bounds

Since 2001 things have really picked up

- site visitors 50%
- ePayments 110%
- property searches 140%
- solicitation downloads 30%
- recycling bins ordered 680%

"To each his own is the philosophy that best describes Portal 2," according to County Webmaster Assia Alexandrova. "It's a much smarter way to connect with our users because it makes their experience on the web more worthwhile."

County Manager George M. Burgess says this concept makes sense from a business standpoint as well, enabling the County to make more informed business decisions. "Using the data we collect from user preferences, we can now gauge public demand and more effectively meet the needs of residents, visitors, businesses, and employees."

In an effort to deepen its reach into the community, the County is piloting a language translation engine on Portal 2 that will translate key web content into Spanish. The translation engine is not as precise as traditional methods, but human and machine will work together to fine-tune the results. The Enterprise Technology Services Department will be closely monitoring the overall performance to see if the translation engine is adequate for public use.

"The old miamidade.gov served our community and the County well, but we have to grow with our users," says Zito. "A personalized approach to presenting web content is consistent with what's going on at other forward-thinking organizations."

SERVING *Your Family*

Community Action Agency's Head Start Continues to Educate Children through Literacy Program

By David Allison, Community Action Agency

Imagine living in a world without knowing how to read. In the United States, it is estimated that more than 10% of children are affected by learning disabilities. There is no better gift a parent could give a child, than a love and motivation for reading.

Miami-Dade Community Action Agency (CAA) Head Start has joined with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Miami-Dade Public Library to collaborate on an innovative approach to promoting reading. The project amply named "Project Bookworm" is a literacy program that encourages parents to begin reading to their children in the earliest stages of their development. The program also addresses the need for increased literacy efforts among adults as well, by making information available to anyone who is interested in learning to read or improving their reading skills.

The program just recently opened a reading room at the DCF center located at 7900 NW 27 Avenue inside the Northside Shopping Mall. Eric Olafson, Federal Affairs Coordinator with the Mayor's office recently presented a proclamation on behalf of Mayor Alex Penelas at the ribbon cutting ceremony. Partnership representatives present at the ceremony included Barbara Mason Gardiner with Miami-Dade Community Action Agency Head Start; Sylvia Stokes, Maria Saenz-Rodriguez and Captain Ifodes represented the Florida Department of Children and Families; and Lucrece Louisidhor with Miami-Dade Public Library.

The program's first location, at the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) Center located at 18300 N. Miami Avenue, opened in February of 2001. This first site proved to be very successful, with more than 900 children and their parents participating in activities at this location. Staff at the reading rooms in both locations includes volunteers from the Community Action Agency's foster grandparents program and other community organizations.



(L to R): Captain Ifode, Lucrece Louisidhor-Louinis, Sylvia Stokes, Glenn Broch, Eric Olafson, Barbara Mason-Gardiner and Maria Saenz-Rodriguez.

Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Department After-School Programs are Underway

Sports Activities and Performing Arts are Just Part of the Fun!

By Laura Phillips, Park and Recreation

It's the start of a brand new school year and Miami-Dade County Park and Recreation Department's after-school programs are underway at more than 42 neighborhood parks. Here, children from first grade on up have a supervised and secure place to play, do homework, practice sports, enjoy activities in the arts and make new friends along the way.



African Heritage Center vocal instructor Andrea Aroz conducts the center's youth choir. The AHCAC offers a variety of exciting arts classes including ballet, modern or hip-hop dance, improvisational acting, band, instrumental and choral music, photography, painting and graphic arts.

Miami-Dade Parks' general After-School Programs will enrich your child with indoor and outdoor games, special events, sports coaching and much more. Included are sports development cycles, where participants learn to improve their abilities in flag football, volleyball, basketball, soccer, softball, track & field, chess and fencing, and have an opportunity to compete in tournaments. Most general programs are held from 2 -6 p.m.



Students at the Raices Hispanic Cultural Arts Center perform for the community. This program offers students, ages 6 to 14, an opportunity to explore a variety of arts disciplines, discover their own interests and talents, and gain a deeper appreciation of Hispanic artistic forms and influences.

Miami-Dade Parks also offers specialized after-school programs including: Leisure Access Services, which provide activities for persons with developmental disabilities, including classes in arts and crafts, cooking, swimming, and more; the After-School Arts Academy at African Heritage Cultural Arts Center's state of the art facility at 6161 NW 22 Ave., which provides developmental instruction in the visual arts, dance, musical theatre, drama, along with instrumental and vocal music for children ages 6-16; Raices Hispanic Cultural Arts Program at Miller Drive Park, 5510 SW 94 Ct., which gives students an appreciation of Hispanic art forms and traditions, with professional instruction in puppets, drama, dance, instrumental and choral music, folk arts, ceramics and other exciting activities for children ages 6-14; and the Jr. Sailing Program at Amelia Earhart Park, 11900 NW 42 Ave., which helps boys and girls, ages 9-14, learn all about sailing through hands on activities at the park's lake. Competitions, special events and water safety instruction are included.

Parks' after-school programs, including park locations, fees and schedules, call 305-755-7800 V/TDD, or visit the Miami-Dade Parks web site at www.miamidade.gov/parks.

Book Lovers Alert: The Annual Library Book Sale is here

By Rhonda Barnett, Public Library

For book lovers and bargain hunters, the Annual Book Sale held by the Friends of the Miami-Dade Public Library is a wonderful opportunity to find that book you've always wanted - or didn't know you wanted. This year's sale takes place on Friday, Oct. 17 from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. and on Saturday, Oct. 18 and Sunday, Oct. 19 from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., at the Main Library, 101 W. Flagler Street. Thousands of books will be available for purchase including children's books, oversized art books, fiction, history, hobbies, travel, biography, and cookbooks.

The Annual Book Sale is the major fundraising effort of the Friends of the Library, which is a volunteer organization created nearly 30 years ago to support the Library System for the benefit of the entire community. Friends' funds provide programs that include everything from meet-the-author events and storytelling festivals, to tutoring, computer workshops and small business workshops. These programs are held, free of charge, at the 38 branches of the Miami-Dade Public Library System.

"The Friends raise money, volunteer at library activities, and help ensure that support for libraries is not taken for granted by keeping public attention focused on the important role libraries play in our community", said Friends' President Priscilla Greenfield. "We're always looking to grow our membership throughout the County."

If you would like more information on becoming a member of the Friends of the Library, call 305-375-5017. If you'd like to volunteer to work during the Book Sale, call 305-375-5572. You can also email the Friends at friends@mdpls.org. And, don't forget to visit the Library's website at www.mdpls.org for a complete list of activities taking place in a library near you!



(L to R): Steve Morris, volunteer; Priscilla Greenfield, President, Friends of the Library; Noelle Galperin, Friends of the Library board member; Carlton Foust, volunteer; and Heidi Markowitz, volunteer.

CITIZEN

Info.

Branch Court Operations... Ensuring Justice Throughout Miami-Dade County

By Natasha Crespo, Courts

Scattered throughout Miami-Dade County and occupying a territory of about 100 square miles, more than 300 people operate the Branch Courts. Fifteen County court judges, along with their judicial assistants and bailiffs, provide unparalleled service to the unique communities in which their courthouses reside.

“The dynamics and operation of every branch court is different,” said Edilfa Perez (Edie), the Administrative Office of the Court’s (AOC) Operations Director for Branch Courts. “Even though there is just one state court system, there are different cultures out there in our branch courthouses. There are different populations, different people and different needs.”

For many residents, their first and perhaps only contact with the court system occurs at these branch locations. Paying traffic and parking tickets, obtaining passports and marriage licenses, are just some of the services residents can take advantage of at the branch sites. The branch court judges will hear a variety of cases including County traffic, misdemeanor, County civil, domestic

violence and simplified dissolution of marriage – uncontested divorces. Non-jury trials are conducted in the branches as well. It’s a smorgasbord of services!

The mission of the entire Operations Division of the AOC, which includes eight divisions, is to provide the most efficient and effective technical and support service in a timely and professional manner to the courts and the public. Specifically, operating the branch courts each day is an enormous task – considering that there are nine courthouse locations scattered throughout the County.



Coordinating the daily operations of the court, dealing with case and workload management, as well as implementing programs, must be handled appropriately in

order to address the different patrons specific to each branch court. There are numerous transactions and activities that take place, and there are people from all different locations interrelated.

For more information about Miami-Dade County’s court system, contact the Office of Government Liaison & Public System at 305-349-8888.

2002 BRANCH COURT OPERATIONS ESTIMATED FACTS

- 19,000 criminal traffic cases filed
- 14,000 misdemeanor cases heard
- 175,160 infraction cases were set for hearing officers
- 65,541 civil cases filed
- 4,498 domestic violence cases filed
- 3,276 divorce cases filed

Home Buyers Club

Credit is the biggest obstacle to qualifying for a home mortgage. Miami-Dade County Housing Finance Authority (HFA), in conjunction with Miami-Dade Affordable Housing Foundation, Inc., offer classes for first-time homebuyers who want to correct their financial past, while they learn about the home buying process. The classes are open to the public and are taught by loan officers, realtors, home inspectors, appraisers and professional credit counselors.

Patricia Braynon, Director of the Miami-Dade County Housing Finance Authority said, “We are working diligently to increase the ability of low to moderate-income persons and families to become new homeowners in Miami-Dade County and this home buying education is the beginning of that process. People will always need shelter and working families deserve fair access to the benefits of homeownership.”

The North Club consists of four sessions and will be taught at the Community Action Agency’s Liberty City Office, 6100-A Northwest 7 Avenue, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The subjects cover eight hours of training on budgeting, credit issues, the loan application process, shopping for a home, homeowners insurance, and home inspections and appraisals. You must attend all four classes to earn a certificate.

The South Club will be held at Martin Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church, 14700 Lincoln Boulevard in Richmond Heights. This class will be held only twice, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. You must attend both classes to earn a certificate. Since the first three-hour session has occurred, those who would like to attend the South Club will have to wait until new classes start up in January, 2004.

North Club	South Club
Name: Community Action Agency Liberty City – CEC Office Address: 6100-A NW 7 Ave Time: 6:00pm to 8:00pm. Dates: Nov.18 Dec.9	Name: Martin Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church Address: 14700 Lincoln Blvd Time: 6:00pm to 9:00pm. Dates: Oct.30

For more information, please log onto www.miamidade.gov/hfa.

CUT

it Out

Emergencies 911

Police Non-Emergency305-4 POLICE
Fire Non-Emergency.....786-331-5000

Answer Center
(Open M-F, 8am-8pm)305-468-5900
Animal Services Unit.....305-884-1101
Bus and Rail Information.....305-770-3131
Center for Employment Hotline ...305-375-5725
Community Councils305-375-2842
Consumer Protection Hotline.....305-375-3677
Consumer Service Switchboard ...305-375-1250
County Manager.....305-375-1032
DERM305-372-6789
Jackson Health System305-585-1111
Libraries305-375-BOOK
Park & Recreation.....305-755-7800
Parking Violations305-275-1133
Mosquito Control.....305-592-1186
Traffic Signals Out.....305-592-3580

Team Metro Neighborhood Service Centers
Downtown.....305-375-4845
North Central305-626-7976
Caleb Center305-636-2333
Northwest305-557-2171
Kendall305-270-4979
South Dade.....305-234-1510
Melrose305-638-6800
University305-222-2133
Northeast.....305-947-9858
West.....305-480-1700

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Miami-Dade County provides equal access and equal opportunity in employment and services and does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

CountyCitizen

We’re more than county employees, we’re your neighbors 